

New to GYE. Want change & need guidance/support

Posted by PureRatzon - 17 May 2016 16:07

I want to thank Hashem's extending his hand and showing me the GYE website. I am addicted to Lust. I am totally powerless, and it is only with the grace of G-d that I can change my life, and myself. I'm 36 years old and have been struggling with this problem for two decades.

B'H I am on my 13th clean day.

Hashem has given me every possible Bracha that a person can ask for. I have 3 healthy beautiful children, a stable career that provides well for my family. A strong wife with great character. People in the community know me and respect me. I have the house, the car. I give Tzeddakah. Obviously, I don't have what is most important, I'm not close to Hashem. I'm not helping those around me. I have spent years of my life living the proverbial 'double life.' On the one hand, striving to learn and daven. I've gone out of my way to help others and have asked for nothing in return. If there is an emergency, I am the first one to help a stranger on the street. I'm a Jew, I know my core is holy. If you asked me in my heart what I truly want out of life, I would respond to connect to Hashem. Yet, I could never get to a point where I would act the way I felt. I had always figured I was just a weak person. Weak willed. I never truly considered my frequent 'falls' could be an addiction. Rather, I thought, I married the wrong person so I wasn't fulfilled. Or I had a horrible childhood so I can 'rationalize' it. Whatever that is supposed to mean.

As I contemplate life, my actions, and my future, and my past, I must face the shocking truth that I am addicted to many things. I am also an alcoholic, an over-eater, and addicted to video games. While none of these addictions have reached a point where they are unmanageable (have not destroyed my career or relationships) I do believe I am rotting away from the inside out. Naturally, these discussions will be focused on lust. Yet, the concepts may veer towards addiction generally and the best way of combating it.

A little more about me. I am a BT who was raised in a cauldron of emptiness. I attended a 'progressive' school in the city which indoctrinated students in all forms of liberalism. My first exposure to Lust was in the fifth grade; when the health class curriculum polluted the impressionable with the concept personal 'exploration' was a step in our development. 'It's natural and healthy' they said. 'Nothing to be ashamed of.' I can't recall precisely how it was conveyed, but our teacher made it clear that avayros were good. So I 'explored' and found a temporary escape from reality. A vivid fantasy world devoid of my greatest troubles and anxieties. Yes, my life was troubled and complicated. Extreme family dysfunction, addiction, alcoholism, infidelity. On multiple occasions I was sent away to live with uncles or family friends for weeks, sometimes months, at a time. Both of my parents had severe personality disorders. I even had it revealed by a family member recently that my mother (and probably my father) were once (and still are) drug addicts. I can't recall all the horrors, feelings of abandonment, fear or troubles of my childhood. It's likely better that way. I can't change the past, and for those things which have scarred me, I would prefer not to rehash and open what may be pandora's box. Besides, I could always escape to fantasy. Video games, TV, booze, and

avayros.

America's lust culture only further solidified my addiction. In middle school there was a preoccupation with girlfriends. Whoever went the farthest was simply the Alpha Male. Whoever's girlfriend was the hottest. Alpha. We searched through our fathers' personal belongings to see if a 'stash' of garbage could be found. I remember frequenting my friend's grandfather's house to watch boxing matches on pay per-view. No one was home. The cable box was unlocked. We even got caught once. When they called my family... 'Oh well, boys will be boys.'

High school came. More of the same. Guys sitting around sharing tales about their conquests. Finding our father's garbage, or finding our own garbage. B'H internet access was spotty at the time. I didn't even know I could find it on the web at the time. I was caught once by a friend. We laughed about it. I was disgusting. If I went to a friend's house who had a sister I found attractive, I would go through underwear drawers. H' Forgive Me! I would fantasize, rate girls on paper. I dated a bit. Lust was one of my addictions, but it never became the sole addiction. B'H I never got into drugs. It would have surely killed me.

Even when Hashem first called out to me as a 17 year old. I met another kid who was becoming BT. He showed me the beauty of Torah and Judaism. I still wouldn't give up my addictions. I recall when first becoming frum, telling my girlfriend at the time, that she could beat me over the head with a baseball bat if I ever became Shomer Negiah. Shabbos was fine, Kashrus, no problem. But my lusting was off-limits. My fingers shutter as I write this. I figured, if I did some Mitzvahs I was still 1,000 times better than the people I grew up with. I could pick and choose. How naïve I was. H' does let you chose. But it's one choice. You can accept all the mitzvahs and be an eved Hashem. I desperately want to choose life. Wanting only points you in the direction. I still have to travel to where I want to be.

I went to Israel. In Israel I began to feel, to know, it was wrong. I stopped for a while, a long while. I fell back when I met some girls in Israel. After all, I went to Israel because I thought it would be a blast. No Tests, No Pressure, No drinking age. Baby steps. had I gone to a goyish college, I would have never gotten out. Israel was hard on me, because I didn't have television or video games I ended out eating. A lot. And purging.

When I returned from Israel I went to a Yeshiva. However, I soon found a non-religious girlfriend. I don't think it was only about lust. I did care for her. I needed a co-dependent relationship. Based on my family dynamic growing up, I always needed to be close with women. Even in my addiction, my fantasies, it's never just about the lust, it was about being wanted. Even all of my closest relationships growing up were with women. Getting girls was woven into the fabric of my self-worth. Unfortunately, it still maybe. But I want to change that about myself.

I tried to stop, and sometimes would have streaks of a week, or two. But never more than that. It's an escape from stress, anxiety, from the pains of life. It started to escape seeing my dysfunctional family suffer. Now, it may be an escape from my own dysfunction.

Eventually, in my 4th year after returning to an American Yeshiva, I broke up with my not frum girlfriend, and put together a streak which must have been at least 3-4 months. I recall that I

had just started to feel like I was finding myself, understanding Judaism. I wanted to be clean, I wanted to be holy, I realized the errors of my perspective and ways. Realizing is only the first step. I desperately wanted to be a good person, close to Hashem. I started shidduch dating, and was quickly set up with my wife. Nice girl, Stable family, Pretty, Cool and Self-Confident. Marrying her was objectively a slam dunk, especially with my background. Dating went fine. Then we slipped. She initiated. It opened up a world and path that I didn't want to go down. I recall thinking that it didn't seem right. I wanted to be frum, and relative to my past girlfriends, this girl was frum. She wasn't a wild girl by any stretch. She had a lot of good to her. Albeit for a short period of time, I had suppressed my drive. Once we slipped our dating life became a mess. Break up, get back, break up, get back. All the while I was in Yeshiva. I never told my Rebbe, I was ashamed, he was busy. He thought I was such a great kid. After all, I never missed a minyan, and I could learn. He even helped try to 'resolve' our dating issues. We broke up for about 6 months. I 'shidduch dated' two other girls, and slept with both of them. I was terrible. I was slipping on a daily basis. We got back together, and all the way up until our wedding we slipped. I thought marriage would be a second chance. That once it was mutar, and I could have two weeks, the 'off time' would be fine. It would be enough to quench my thirst. But, the more you feed it, the more it wants. I am married 14 years now, and I don't think I have ever had a 90 day streak.

Throughout graduate school and residency, I continued doing it, on a daily basis. It became ingrained into who I was. I recall sitting in the library downloading video after video when I should have been studying. I recall flirting with and building fantasies with my classmates. B'H I had my first child in graduate school. If not, I would have surely fallen further.

It continued at the start of my career. 5 years ago, for a variety of reasons (not justifications), I started a 3 month long affair with someone I had met at work. I would stay out late, thought about her all the time. Fantasized, slipped when I was with her and wasn't with her. It couldn't work. I had two kids at the time, and she was much younger than I was. After that experience, I felt like I slipped so far. I still remember the fear of testing myself for STD's because, I felt like I needed to. I felt like I was no longer a Jew. Yes I was shomer Shabbos and shomer kashrus, but I was dating a non-jew. Because of my profession, I can always stay out late for an 'emergency.' I hated my wife, and although she does not know about the affair, she acknowledges that there was something different about me during that time period. She recalls that she hated me, and didn't even want me to touch her during that time period. We broke up in the summer, and I started listening to Torah classes to and from work. I thought I did Teshuva. I cried. I cried a lot. I have even seen that girl from work on social occasions again, and did not slip, despite the opportunity to do so. I even went on an almost 3 month streak during elul/yom kippur time. But I fell again in the winter. Met another girl, had another 5 month affair. This girl was Jewish, but not frum. I felt like I was being torn apart. Late nights at the girlfriend, waking up early with my young children to feed them breakfast. Trying to teach my kids how to live, when I didn't know how to myself. Again, my wife never caught me. But I think she *knew* something just wasn't right. I ended this affair.

Recently, before I found GYE, I started to see another woman, who gave me an existential crisis. She was a younger single mother. I got so bad, slipping up every day. I never was 'with' her, but we would text each other things constantly. I would call her, speak with her, text her, and use that as food for a fantasy and to slip up again. I started texting on Shabbos a few months ago, terrible avayros. I stopped. She called it off, and we have not seen each other for

a few months. I was emotionally torn apart. I started using the internet more and more and felt like I needed to act out in person again. The internet was never enough for me. I didn't have time to commit to another 'relationship' or affair, so I started looking to other possibilities. It was in looking for those possibilities that I felt like I stumbled on urges which could have led to terrible places. I almost considered leaving my wife, and my family. My entire life for this last Lust. B'H she stopped seeing *me*. IF she hadn't I may not be here now. My life almost slipped away.

I don't know why, I don't know how, but somehow, around Pesach time, I heard a lecture about freedom from addiction, and it led me to GYE. Freedom, true Chayrus, will hopefully come over time. I'm still raw. I have a lot of stress at work, and I don't have a 'soft' affectionate wife at home. She is a good person, a strong person, but she does not feed my co-dependency. I'm a simple Jew from a horrible background that is trying to improve himself. I know I have a lot of inner turmoil. I know I have imperfect middos and I have to literally recreate my entire self. Destroy the past aspects of me that were weak, and rebuild myself as the best me. I am going to pick one addiction at a time. I'll start with Lust, and the first step of going through the 12 steps. I am powerlessness over lust. I don't stand a chance. And Hashem is all that can save me. Please Hashem, save me. Please bring me back to you with pure Teshuva. True Teshuva. I said I was a BT earlier. No.. Now I am a BT. I want to love my wife. I want to improve my marriage. I want to be a better person. A better father. I feel like GYE, getting my lust under control, is the first step. I want to love my wife and have a normal marriage. I want to look at her and see her as beautiful. Unfortunately, when I look at her she looks hideous compare to the other women I have been with, compare to the things I have seen. How can she compete to the things I have seen? To where I have been?

I hope that Hashem can help me overcome this. That once I go long enough without slipping up and looking at terrible things, that I can finally see my wife with fresh beauty. The way I saw her when I first went out with her. Will it get better? Can I save my marriage, Save my life?

I am still on the first step, contemplating it. Internalizing it. I am addicted to Lust. I am powerless to overcome it. It turns me into a monster. In that respect it is unmanageable. The moment I am throwing away eternity for an escape into fantasy land, I am living an unmanageable life.

Does anyone in the community have any suggestions? Does anyone want to help sponsor me?

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Re: New to GYE. Want change & need guidance/support
Posted by joe409bruns - 17 May 2016 20:03

PureRatzon: Thank you for opening up and expressing your desire to tackle your addiction. I pray that G-d helps you on the road to recovery. It's going to be challenging. It seems that what is effective is to post something BEFORE you act on an impulse. By getting it out of your

system, it's likely that you'll be able to think first and hopefully you'll get some responses that will encourage you to do "Sur MayRa." Hatzlacha!..Joe

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Re: New to GYE. Want change & need guidance/support
Posted by joe409bruns - 17 May 2016 20:06

So far B"H I've been "clean" since I joined GYE, bli eyin hora. But it's been cold and rainy for the past few weeks and everyone around here' wearing coats and jackets. I'm afraid that once the weather warms up and clothing comes off, I'm going to be tempted again. I've discovered that seeing women on the street gets the hormones going which has lead to my falling. I'm not interested in wearing foggy glasses, but does anyone have suggestions for how you go about the streets when women are not so modestly clad? Thank you all..Joe

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Re: New to GYE. Want change & need guidance/support
Posted by cordnoy - 17 May 2016 20:15

Welcome pureratzon,

It is truly a compelling story.

Life is tough and you are making a strong move.

May God be with you.

B'hatzlachah

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Re: New to GYE. Want change & need guidance/support
Posted by PureRatzon - 17 May 2016 20:43

Joe, I'm still learning myself. It's hard in NYC. Midtown is crowded, and the summer is hot. If you don't look where you are going you can literally run into people. I try to find permissible things to focus on and not actually look at the periphery. I.e. if a guy is walking a few feet in front of me, I'll try to check out his suit or shirt. By focusing forward I'm still able to peripherally notice other people to make so I don't run them over. B'H it hasn't gotten that bad yet. I hope I can follow my own advice when the summer gets hot. Keep fighting brother. Seeing that other people on the site are able to overcome this gives me hope.

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Re: New to GYE. Want change & need guidance/support
Posted by PureRatzon - 17 May 2016 21:17

Thanks! Hopefully this is just the beginning. I'm going to work slowly, methodically. Working on Step 1, and keeping the streak alive. Avoiding women (except wife) at all costs! It starts with the eyes. I have noticed that the more careful I am about what I look at, the more the desire decreases. I'm going to try to throw my energies into work.

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Re: New to GYE. Want change & need guidance/support
Posted by BenTorah.BaalHabayis - 17 May 2016 21:22

Wow. What a story and what an honest share!

I wish I could offer a suggestion but I've never been in your shoes. In fact, in comparison to what you've been through it makes my struggles seem like kid's play. I'm not trying to minimize what I or people like me struggle with, but I'm thinking to myself that if someone who's gone as far as you have can make a turnaround and a serious effort to break free certainly we should be able to. It's like "Yosef mechayev es ha'rshoyim".

Your story also serves as a good reminder that all these imagined fantasies (and I'm dealing with such a fantasy) never made anyone happy or fulfilled. While acting upon the fantasy may provide a temporary thrill or high, in the end game we come out empty and broken.

?I hope Hashem gives you the strength and courage to truly recover from this addiction and see

your relationship with Him and your wife blossom!

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Re: New to GYE. Want change & need guidance/support

Posted by neshamaincharge - 17 May 2016 21:30

Welcome aboard. This GYE train has helped me tremendously. You've come to a good place.

Many people have gotten the help they need here. May you and your marriage continue to grow and may your journey be blessed with hatzlacha!

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Re: New to GYE. Want change & need guidance/support

Posted by PureRatzon - 17 May 2016 21:40

Thanks BenTorah. A Man's Lust is an endless pit of desires. The Yetzer is trying to kill us.

Literally Kill us. It will stop at nothing to push us to deeper Avayros. Your kind words give me Chizuk. I just thank Hashem that the shiur on freedom came at the right time when I was *ready* to **hear** the Torah. Who knows how far I could have spiraled.

But you have to give yourself more credit. I've never been in your shoes. I was desensitized at such a young age. It is impossible to say whose Nisayon is harder. Maybe your efforts and accomplishments are greater because the stimulus has more of an effect on you because you were never desensitized. The one thing we can certainly agree on, is that Hashem ordered the Yetzer Hara to give us tests. We choose if the Tests get harder, or what the stakes are.

Everytime we slip the situation get's more dire. We need to just call out to our father in Shamayim to save us. Kol Min Hashmayim Chutz M'Yera Shamayim.

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Re: New to GYE. Want change & need guidance/support

Posted by PureRatzon - 17 May 2016 21:54

Love the Picture! Thanks for the support and the brachos. I know the future holds tests, but I at least feel like I have tools and support now.

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Re: New to GYE. Want change & need guidance/support
Posted by markz - 17 May 2016 22:45

Welcome!!!

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Re: New to GYE. Want change & need guidance/support
Posted by realsimcha - 18 May 2016 03:43

Welcome!!! Great to have you!!! What a journey. Hope the road is less bumpy from here on ...
from now o there will be company on the road to share your journey with you. Keep posting!

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